

Sunderland's Bill Fraser in goal, Manchester City and England's Jimmy Meadows, Tottenham and Wales' Mel Hopkins and Blackburn Rovers and England Captain Ronnie Clayton. We also had Albert Quixall who played for Manchester United and England, Mel Charles for Swansea and Wales, Phil Woosnam, Wales and West Ham, then there was me - Chelsea and England. Our Army side was even invited up to Glasgow Rangers for an exhibition match to open their new floodlights - there was a crowd of over fifty thousand to see us win two-nil.

The trouble with that workload, on top of my day-to-day Army work, was that it became very tiring mentally as well as physically. It was certainly a season of extremes for me, one day I could be cleaning out the toilets in the Army barracks, or playing in what were no more than park kick-about, then I had the contrast of being picked for the full England team and winning the First Division Championship.

I'll never forget being called up to represent my country for the first time. I got back to barracks on the Sunday evening, after our three-all draw at Roker Park [photo right], and had no idea what was about to happen the next morning over breakfast in the Sergeant's Mess. As I sat down to eat, Tosh Chamberlain told me that The Colonel wanted to see me straight away. Tosh was a real joker and there was no way I was going to fall for his tricks first thing in the morning, "get lost", I said to him. Tosh replied, "Frank, on my life, I'm not kidding..." and he looked so serious and concerned himself that I knew he was being straight with me and it wasn't another goose chase.

So off I went to The Colonel's office, I knocked on the door and I heard him boom; "Ah Blunstone, come in. You've been picked to play for England on Wednesday, go and get a pass and make sure you're back here on Thursday morning at eight o'clock". That was it, no 'well done Frank', all he seemed interested in was that I was back on camp almost straight away.

Ronnie Allen from West Brom had been picked ahead of me originally, but he got injured in their game on the Saturday and had to pull out. That gave me my big chance, but I had a touch of the flu. I arrived at Hendon Hall Hotel on the Monday evening and spoke to the England Manager, Walter Winterbottom. As I wasn't feeling very well he told me to dose myself up with medicine and not to train with the team the next day, but I was desperate to play, there was no way I was going to miss that game against Wales. Chelsea Captain, Roy Bentley, was there with me which was a big help, to have a familiar face in the camp is very reassuring, he was a father figure really. Roy had a great game against Wales, scoring all three England goals and his record for his country was hugely impressive.



November 1954 – Action from the 3-3 draw at Sunderland's Roker Park



Training at Stamford Bridge – Frank and the lads set off on a long run